illustrate the breadth of his reading in relevant scientific literature – some of it specially bought by the Royal Society for his use[39] – and in his descriptions he was frequently able to use specimens in the collection to convict earlier writers of inaccuracy and misidentification, while also rationalizing some of the strange phenomena which had preoccupied virtuosi like Hubert, such as the supposed power of the *Echeneis remora*.[40]

So the repository was central to the Royal Society's plan for the systematic reform of knowledge, but what was it actually like? In fact, the enterprise fell short of the grandiose ambitions for it in a manner which was typical of the early Royal Society. For one thing, the idea of a comprehensive series of common things as well as rare ones fell by the wayside, as is revealed by comparing the actual collection chronicled in Grew's *Musæum Regalis Societatis* with Hubert's catalogue. For though by 1681 the collection had been swollen by gifts to between two and three times the size of Hubert's cabinet, it remained similar to Hubert's in its basic physiognomy, dominated by the exotic and the monstrous at the expense of ordinary items. In the section on quadrupeds, for instance, some items were added, such as a beaver and fragments of a tiger; in other cases, as with a rhinoceros horn, the Royal Society could boast multiple specimens where Hubert had had only one; but much remained the same – a sloth, armadillos, chameleons, crocodiles and the like.[41] Throughout, exotic specimens greatly outnumbered native ones, while even things like 'A Cross of wood, growing in the form of Saint Andrews Cross', which Hubert had valued as a great curiosity, remained in the collection as catalogued by Grew, although Grew had a perfectly prosaic explanation of the process of grafting which had evidently occurred.[42] It is almost as if the 'scientific' characteristics of Grew's catalogue were imposed on a collection which remained inspired by the criteria of rarity and curiosity typical of virtuoso cabinets. Indeed, a comparison of Grew's and Hubert's catalogues reveals that the collection had actually become more like a normal virtuoso cabinet, since whereas Hubert's cabinet had been limited to natural rarities, well-intentioned gifts added a miscellaneous selection of man-made curiosities to the Royal Society's museum, such as a box of 100 turned cups one within the other and various ethnographic specimens.[43]

In this, the repository reflected the proclivities of the virtuosi who formed the staple of the Society's membership and whose gifts were the principal source of the additions which were made to the collection in the Society's early years. They clearly shared the preoccupation with the outlandish and the extraordinary, and the disdain for the commonplace, which is so marked in virtuoso collections like Hubert's. It is evident that only the unusual seemed to them appropriate as gifts – double eggs rather than ordinary ones, African birds rather than British – and these donors remained immune to the valuation of the ordinary urged by Grew and others.[44]

A collection of this kind undoubtedly had a certain value. Anatomical oddities could claim attention as illustrating nature 'erring' or 'out of course',[45] while the plethora of

[39] Birch 1756–7, vol. 3, p. 450; Royal Society MS Account books, s.v. 1679–81.

[40] Grew 1681, *passim* and p. 104; Hubert 1665, p. 24.

[41] Grew 1681, part 1, sect. 2; Hubert 1665, *passim*.

[42] Hubert n.d., p. 18; Grew 1681, p. 184.

[43] Grew 1681, part 4. This section also contains the Society's scientific apparatus.

[44] Ibid., pp. 4–5, 78–9 and *passim*. On virtuoso values, see esp. Houghton 1942.

[45] Bacon 1857–74, vol. 2, p. 102. See also Park and Daston 1981, pp. 43–51.